



# KEEPING YOUR RELATIONSHIP HEALTHY

You see it everywhere that human beings collaborate: corporate boardrooms and stadium locker-rooms, fire stations and squad cars, concert stages and research labs. Committed teams seek and discover new, effective ways of cultivating partnership to set, achieve and exceed shared goals.

For any team to thrive, its partners must invest creative energy, counter challenges and cope with change. Nowhere is this truer than in the most basic of human partnerships – the relationship with one's significant other.

Most experts agree that there is no simple recipe for a happy relationship. The good news is that by adopting and maintaining a few basic habits, you and your partner can build and sustain a healthy foundation that will help keep your marriage strong.

- » **Take an active interest** – Take the time to share in your partner's day. One way to do this is to make a point of not leaving the house in the morning without finding out at least one thing that will happen to your partner that day.
- » **Discuss your expectations** – It's easy to presume that a certain expectation is so natural it doesn't need to be discussed. But we all have preconceived notions, and our partners may have different assumptions that are just as legitimate as ours. Whether the issue is household chores or holidays with family, budgets and spending or intimacy, ask yourself, "What did I expect?" If your own expectations seem reasonable, vocalize them. Then listen – *really* listen – to your partner's views and needs. Discuss the issues with an open mind, and remember that you are on the same team!
- » **Make time for each other** – In a world that focuses on personal goals, we need to remember to set aside time to enjoy our loved ones. We all went through "couples rituals" during our courtships, but how many of us have kept them alive in our committed relationships? Consider starting a weekly tradition of setting a date to do something together that you both enjoy. Keep it simple: a stroll, a shared meal or cup of coffee can go a long way! Talk, reminisce, and get to know each other again.
- » **Roll with change** – A partnership of this kind is a long-term commitment "till death do us part" in most cases, but no one can promise (or expect someone else) to stay the same over the years. We each grow and learn in different ways, at different paces and in different places. Communicate, share, re-discover and love each other through your evolution.
- » **Fight fair** – Don't be afraid of conflict: it can be a powerful enabler of positive change, if it is conducted fairly and without negativity. Focus on the behavior ("Can you please remember to wipe the sink?"), not on the person ("Why are you such a slob?"). State requests directly, and concentrate on one issue at a time. Stay respectful, even when you're upset – that means no contempt, such as sarcasm, eye-rolling, or verbal put-downs. And when the conflict is over, let it be over.

Remember: This type of partnership is a commitment between loving friends. If you and your partner can nurture your relationship with love while making room for each other as individuals, then it will be healthy and strong.

And, of course, your EAP can also provide you with help accessing available resources and referrals to help you cope with marriage, family and relationship issues.

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Many of us have relationship challenges at one time or another. Generally, we can manage them on our own. At times, however, help is needed, and a skilled professional can provide focus, direction and support.

Through its group coaching and clinical counseling programs, MHN can help you identify and resolve such problems as marital and relationship challenges, family conflicts and communication issues. Sessions are typically conducted in a counselor's private office or over the phone.

For more information, call  
(866) EAP-4SOC  
(866) 327-4762

TDD callers, please dial (800) 327-0801

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[www.eap4soc.mhn.com](http://www.eap4soc.mhn.com)  
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